

## CLAIMS

1           1.     A method for securely sending an electronic message to  
2 multiple recipients, the method comprising:

3               (a)     receiving an indication of an encrypted electronic message to  
4 be sent to multiple recipient users;

5               (b)     storing a single copy of the electronic message;

6               (c)     creating a notification electronic message including a reference  
7 to the electronic message;

8               (d)     sending a copy of the notification electronic message to each  
9 of the recipient users; and

10              upon receiving a request from a recipient user for the referenced  
11 electronic message,

12               (e)     decrypting the received encrypted electronic message;

13               (f)     retrieving an encryption key for the recipient user;

14               (g)     encrypting a copy of the decrypted electronic message  
15 with the retrieved encryption key; and

16               (h)     sending the encrypted copy to the recipient user for  
17 temporary storage while the sent encrypted copy is reviewed.

1           2.     The method of claim 1 including:

2              under the control of the server, when it is determined that an  
3 encrypted copy of the electronic message has been sent to all of the recipient users,  
4 deleting the stored single copy of the electronic message.

1           3.     The method of claim 1 including:

2              under the control of the server, when it is determined that an  
3 encrypted copy of the electronic message has been sent to all of the recipient users

1                    8.        The method of claim 1 wherein for at least one recipient user,  
2        before the copy of the notification electronic message is sent to the at least one  
3        recipient user, the copy is encrypted with the encryption key for the at least one  
4        recipient user.

1           9.     The method of claim 1 wherein the recipient user is unable to  
2 permanently store the electronic message.

1           10.    The method of claim 1 wherein steps (a)-(h) are performed  
2 under control of a server computer, and including:

3                before the receiving of the indication, under control of a sending  
4 computer,

5                       receiving an indication of the electronic message;

6                       retrieving an encryption key for the server computer, the server  
7 encryption key distinct from the retrieved encryption key for the recipient user;

8                       encrypting the electronic message with the retrieved server  
9 encryption key; and

10                      sending the encrypted electronic message to the server  
11 computer.

1           11.    A computer-implemented method for sending an electronic  
2 communication to recipients, the method comprising:

3                receiving an indication of an electronic communication and of at least  
4 one recipient to receive the electronic communication;

5                determining whether multiple recipients of the electronic  
6 communication have been indicated; and

7                when it is determined that multiple recipients have been indicated,

8                       storing the electronic communication;

9                       notifying each of the multiple recipients of the electronic  
10 communication without sending the electronic communication to the recipients; and

11                      in response to a request for the electronic communication from  
12 a recipient, sending the electronic communication to the recipient.

1           12. The method of claim 11 including:  
2           when it is determined that multiple recipients have not been indicated,  
3           sending the electronic communication to the recipient without  
4           waiting for a request for the electronic communication.

1           13. The method of claim 11 including:  
2           tracking the sending of the electronic communication to the  
3           recipients; and  
4           when the electronic communication has been sent to all of the  
5           recipients, deleting the stored electronic communication.

1           14. The method of claim 11 including:  
2           when it is determined that the electronic communication has been sent  
3           to all of the recipients and that none of the recipients have indicated that the  
4           electronic communication is to be saved, deleting the stored electronic  
5           communication.

1           15. The method of claim 11 including:  
2           when it is determined that the electronic communication has been sent  
3           to all of the recipients and that all of the recipients have indicated that the electronic  
4           communication can be deleted, deleting the stored electronic communication.

1           16. The method of claim 11 including:  
2           determining a period of time for which the electronic communication  
3           will be stored; and  
4           when the determined period of time has expired, deleting the stored  
5           electronic communication.

1           17. The method of claim 11 wherein the notifying of a recipient of  
2 the electronic communication involves sending a distinct indicator electronic  
3 communication to the recipient.

1           18. The method of claim 11 including retrieving notifying  
2 instructions for a recipient, and wherein the notifying of the recipient is performed  
3 according to the notifying instructions.

1           19. The method of claim 18 wherein the notifying instructions are  
2 supplied by a sender of the electronic communication.

1           20. The method of claim 18 wherein the notifying instructions are  
2 supplied by the recipient.

1           21. The method of claim 18 wherein the notifying instructions are  
2 determined automatically based on past interactions with the recipient.

1           22. The method of claim 18 wherein the notifying instructions  
2 indicate that the notifying is to be performed in an encrypted manner.

1           23. A computer-implemented method for sending an electronic  
2 communication to a plurality of recipients, the method comprising:  
3           receiving an indication of the electronic communication and of the  
4 plurality of recipients to receive the electronic communication;  
5           storing a single copy of the electronic communication;  
6           notifying each of the recipients of the electronic communication  
7 without sending the electronic communication to the recipients; and  
8           in response to a request for the electronic communication from a  
9 recipient, sending the electronic communication to the recipient.

1                    29.    The method of claim 27 wherein the sending instructions  
2    indicate that the sending is to be performed in an encrypted manner.

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1 30. A computer-implemented method for one of a plurality of  
2 designated recipients of an electronic communication to receive the electronic  
3 communication from a server that stores a single copy of the electronic  
4 communication, the method comprising:

5 receiving an electronic communication notification from the server  
6 that references the single copy of the electronic communication, the electronic  
7 communication notification distinct from the electronic communication;

8 requesting from the server the referenced electronic communication;

9 and

10 receiving from the server a copy of the requested electronic  
11 communication.

1 31. The method of claim 30 including:

2 when access to the electronic communication is no longer desired,  
3 indicating to the server to delete the electronic communication, so that the server  
4 deletes the single stored copy of the electronic communication after receiving  
5 indications from all recipients to delete the electronic communication.

1 32. The method of claim 31 including:

2 after the receiving of the electronic communication notification,  
3 storing the electronic communication notification locally; and

4 after the indicating to the server to delete the electronic  
5 communication, deleting the stored electronic communication notification even if  
6 all recipients have not indicated to delete the electronic communication.

1 33. The method of claim 31 including storing the electronic  
2 communication locally such that the local stored electronic communication is  
3 preserved even when the server deletes the single stored copy.

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1 34. The method of claim 30 wherein the electronic communication  
2 received from the server is encrypted using a public encryption key for the one of  
3 the plurality of designated recipients, and including retrieving a private encryption  
4 key for the one of the plurality of designated recipients to decrypt the electronic  
5 communication.

1 35. The method of claim 30 wherein the method is performed by a  
2 receiving computer lacking sufficient permanent storage to store the electronic  
3 communication.

1 36. The method of claim 30 wherein contents of the received  
2 electronic communication notification are based on preferences for the one of the  
3 plurality of designated recipients, the preferences previously supplied to the server.

1 37. A computer-readable medium containing instructions for  
2 controlling a computer system to send an electronic communication to recipients  
3 by:

4 receiving an indication of an electronic communication and of at least  
5 one recipient to receive the electronic communication;

6 determining whether multiple recipients of the electronic  
7 communication have been indicated; and

8 when it is determined that multiple recipients have been indicated,

9 storing the electronic communication;

10 notifying each of the multiple recipients of the electronic  
11 communication without sending the electronic communication to the recipients; and

12 in response to a request for the electronic communication from  
13 a recipient, sending the electronic communication to the recipient.

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1           38. The computer-readable medium of claim 37 wherein the  
2 computer system is further controlled by:  
3           when it is determined that multiple recipients have not been indicated,  
4           sending the electronic communication to the recipient without  
5 waiting for a request for the electronic communication.

1           39. The computer-readable medium of claim 37 wherein the  
2 computer system is further controlled by:  
3           tracking the sending of the electronic communication to the  
4 recipients; and  
5           when the electronic communication has been sent to all of the  
6 recipients, deleting the stored electronic communication.

1           40. The computer-readable medium of claim 37 wherein the  
2 computer system is further controlled:  
3           when it is determined that the electronic communication has been sent  
4 to all of the recipients and that the electronic communication has not been indicated  
5 to be saved by any of the recipients, deleting the stored electronic communication.

1           41. A computer system for sending an electronic communication  
2 to recipients, comprising:  
3           a communication distributor for receiving an indication of the  
4 electronic communication and of at least one recipient to receive the electronic  
5 communication, for determining whether multiple recipients of the electronic  
6 communication have been indicated, for storing the electronic communication and  
7 notifying each of the multiple recipients of the electronic communication without  
8 sending the electronic communication to the recipients when it is determined that  
9 multiple recipients have been indicated, and for sending the electronic

10 communication to a recipient in response to a request for the electronic  
11 communication from the recipient.

1 42. The computer system of claim 41 wherein the communication  
2 distributor is further for sending the electronic communication to a single recipient  
3 without waiting for a request for the electronic communication when it is  
4 determined that multiple recipients have not been indicated.

1 43. The computer system of claim 42, further comprising:  
2 a communication tracker for tracking the sending of the electronic  
3 communication to the recipients, and for deleting the stored electronic  
4 communication when the electronic communication has been sent to all of the  
5 recipients.

1 44. The computer system of claim 43, further comprising:  
2 a communication tracker for deleting the stored electronic  
3 communication when it is determined that the electronic communication has been  
4 sent to all of the recipients and that the electronic communication has not been  
5 indicated to be saved by any of the recipients.